

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 IO-13 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04
H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01
SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 AID-05 ACDA-07 DHA-02 ORM-02
/097 W

-----051229Z 010512 /41

R 050603Z MAY 77
FM AMEMBASSY TUNIS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6659
INFO AMEMBASSY PARIS

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE TUNIS 3109

E.O.11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT SHUM TS
SUBJECT: INTERIOR MINISTER ANNOUNCES THAT HUMAN RIGHTS
LEAGUE WILL BE APPROVED

REF: TUNIS 3062, TUNIS 2378

1. MINISTER OF INTERIOR TAHAR BALKHODJA ANNOUNCED ON
MAY 3 (IN A SPEECH GIVEN TO MEETING OF THE PSD PARTY
PRESS CELL) THAT THE GOT WOULD SOON APPROVE THE "TUNISIAN
ASSOCIATION FOR THE DEFENSE OF THE RIGHTS OF MAN" (ALSO
CALLED THE "LEAGUE FOR THE RIGHTS OF MAN"). THIS IS
FIRST PUBLIC ACKNOWLEDGEMENT BY GOT OFFICIAL THAT LEAGUE
WILL BE APPROVED.

2. IN PRESS ACCOUNTS OF SPEECH THE INTERIOR MINISTER
ALSO WAS QUOTED ON THE ROLE OF THE PRESS IN TUNISIAN SOCIETY.
HE IS REPORTED TO HAVE STATED THAT TUNISIA IS PASSING
THROUGH A DECISIVE PERIOD IN ITS HISTORY, WHICH DEMANDS
THAT JOURNALISTS BE GIVEN TOTAL LIBERTY TO ANALYZE AND
COMMENT ON POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC SUBJECTS WITHOUT ANY
RESTRAINT. BELKHODJA WAS ALSO QUOTED IN SEMI-INDEPENDENT
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LE TEMPS AS SAYING THAT "WE ARE NO LONGER AFRAID OF
TRACTS THAT CIRCULATE IN TUNIS NOR OF GROUPS THAT ARE
SPRINGING UP EVERYWHERE."

3. ALTHOUGH WE CANNOT ATTEST TO HOW SINCERE BELKHODJA IS
IN HIS ESPOUSAL OF LIBERALIZATION WITHIN
THE ONE-PARTY SYSTEM, TOLERANCE FOR OPPOSING VIEWS AND HIS

STATEMENTS IN FAVOR OF A VIGOROUS AND FREE PRESS, HE IS THE ONLY SENIOR GOT OFFICIAL WHO HAS TAKEN SUCH A PUBLIC STAND ON THESE ISSUES. WITH THE APPROVAL OF THE LEAGUE FOR THE RIGHTS OF MAN UNDOUBTEDLY CLOSE AT HAND, BELKHODJA HAS APPARENTLY CHOSEN TO ANNOUNCE ITS IMPENDING OFFICIAL AUTHORIZATION NOW IN ORDER TO HEAD OFF EXPECTED CRITICISM FROM THE "LIBERAL" ORGANIZERS OF THE CONFERENCE ON PUBLIC LIBERTIES PLANNED FOR EARLY JUNE. THIS AND OTHER BELKHODJA STATEMENTS MAY ALSO HAVE BEEN MOTIVATED BY HIS INTEREST IN SHOWING HIMSELF AS A POPULAR AND MODERATE ALTERNATIVE, SHOULD ONE EVENTUALLY BE CALLED FOR, TO THE GOVERNMENT'S AND THE PARTY'S PRESENTLY MORE CONSERVATIVE LEADERSHIP. MULCAHY

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: HUMAN RIGHTS, PUBLIC ATTITUDES, THE PRESS, SOCIAL CHANGE
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 05-May-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977TUNIS03109
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770158-0096
Format: TEL
From: TUNIS
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770588/aaaacxyw.tel
Line Count: 75
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: acd18a99-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 77 TUNIS 3062, 77 TUNIS 2378
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 22-Mar-2005 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2623134
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: INTERIOR MINISTER ANNOUNCES THAT HUMAN RIGHTS LEAGUE WILL BE APPROVED
TAGS: PINT, SHUM, TS, (BELKHODJA, TAHAR)
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/acd18a99-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009